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PERCEPTIONS OF MARITAL TOGETHERNESS AND COMPANIONSHIP:
A STUDY OF OLDER MEN'S MARITAL RELATIONSHIPS

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PREFACE

The research described here was undertaken as part of a field experiment supported by a grant from The John and Mary R. Markle Foundation. The project had several aims: to explore retirement as a social-psychological process, particularly from the perspectives of role incumbents on either side of the transition; to learn how the retirement experience is influenced, if at all, by interactions among these two groups; and to determine what role networked information and communication media might play in establishing or maintaining them.

From a large organization in the greater Los Angeles area, volunteers were recruited to take part in a task force on the transition to retirement in today's policy environment; their task was to prepare a white paper identifying key issues and making recommendations to organizations and to individuals about retirement planning. Participants, all male, ranged in age from 55 to 71 years; half were retired and half were employed but eligible to retire. The two groups were comparable in age and occupational status.

This paper was prepared in partial fulfillment of requirements for a Master's degree in psychology from UCLA's Psychology Department. A comprehensive report of results from the larger research project of which this is a part will be available in late 1988. Copies may be requested from The RAND Corporation Publications Department (T. K. Bikson, Principal Investigator).

CONTENTS

PREFACE	iii
TABLES	vii
Section	
SUMMARY	1
Goals of the Study	1
Sample and Approach	1
Results	2
Conclusions	3
I. INTRODUCTION	5
II. LITERATURE REVIEW	7
Studies on Older Marriages: Cross-Sectional Data	7
Studies on Older Marriages: Longitudinal Data	12
Studies on Retirement and Marriage	16
Companionship and Marital Quality	19
III. METHOD	24
Subjects	24
Measures	25
IV. RESULTS	27
Perceptions of Marital Closeness	27
Loneliness	28
Friendships	28
Employment Status	29
Household Activities and Employment Status	29
Shared Activities and Marital Togetherness	33
V. DISCUSSION	35
Variable Perceptions of Togetherness	35
Social Relationships	35
Employment Status	36
Weekend Companionship	37
Summary	38
VI. REFERENCES	40



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A-1	

TABLES

1. Group Differences in Satisfaction on Marital Togetherness Index	28
2. Group Differences in Reporting Couples as Friends on Marital Togetherness Index	29
3. Group Differences in Employment Status on Marital Togetherness Index	30
4. Group Differences in Employment Status on Weekend Time Spent Doing Household Tasks	30
5. Group Differences in Wife's Employment Status On Weekend Time Spent Doing Household Tasks	31
6. Group Differences by Couple's Employment Status on Weekend Time Spent Doing Household Tasks	32
7. Correlations of Shared Activities and Marital Togetherness Index	33

SUMMARY

GOALS OF THE STUDY

This paper reports the results of a study concerned with self-evaluations of marital quality among older men who, for the most part, have remained married for long periods. The primary purpose is to better understand how older men's feelings of being paired with their wives or being apart from their wives relate to how they spend their time. To this end, the study assesses men's perception of marital closeness in comparison with their self-reports of activities shared with their wives. In addition, it examines the relationship between perceptions of the marriage and perceptions of close friendships and feelings of loneliness. In focusing the analysis on a set of men either retired or close to retirement, this study also addresses possible differences between employed and retired men, with and without working wives, in regard to household tasks.

This study looks at older persons' marital experiences without comparison to younger samples or to their own experiences at prior times. Further, it deals exclusively with men's experiences in the marriage.

SAMPLE AND APPROACH

The subjects were 71 of 80 participants in a year-long study conducted by The RAND Corporation on the retirement process. About half the participant group had already retired in the last two years from middle-management or professional positions in a large corporate setting. The all male group had volunteered to participate. The subgroup of 71 participants in this study are all those who were married; some of these men had been married more than once.

In-person interviews were conducted with each participant and averaged 70 minutes in length. At the end of the interview each participant was given a set of psychological scales, including an eight-item version of the Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale, to complete and return to the researchers by mail.

Six measures were used to help assess the subjects' marital satisfaction and use of time:

- The degree to which the husband felt paired with his wife
- The husband's satisfaction with the degree of their pairing
- The husband's perception of time shared with his wife
- The degree to which the husband felt lonely
- The husband's perception of and satisfaction with existing friendships
- Analysis of the husband's weekend activities

RESULTS

Perceptions of Marital Closeness

Those men who felt more paired with their wives estimated that a greater percentage of their non-work time was spent with their wives. Since these items were highly intercorrelated, they were combined to form the Marital Togetherness Index, created for this study. A high score on this index indicates greater perceived closeness or togetherness with one's wife. Men who were very satisfied with their marital arrangement had significantly higher index scores. Men who felt more paired with their wives also tended to be more satisfied with the marriage.

Men who perceived their marriages as "less together" were also more likely to feel lonely. Regarding friendships, satisfaction ratings of the amount of contact that respondents have with close friends in general revealed no relationship between perceptions of marital togetherness and satisfaction of contact with one's close friends.

Employment Status

This study is the first to assess differences in marital togetherness for retired and employed men in older marriages. The analyses on retired and employed respondents revealed no significant differences between the groups on the Marital Togetherness Index: In terms of perceived togetherness, retired men view their marital relationships no differently than employed men of similar ages.

Household Activities and Employment Status

Employed men tended to spend a greater proportion of their weekend activities than retired men on tasks such as home, yard, and car chores; preparing meals; and shopping or errands. Those men whose wives worked tended to spend significantly more weekend time on household tasks than those whose wives did not work. The group in which both the respondent and his wife were employed spent more time on household tasks over the weekend at levels approaching significance. Retired men did not differ in the amount or proportion of time spent on household tasks depending on the employment status of their wives.

Shared Activities and Marital Togetherness

Greater proportions of weekend time spent with one's wife was significantly related to subjects' perceptions of the marriage as "more together" on the Marital Togetherness Index. The proportion of weekend time spent alone was negatively correlated with perceptions of marital togetherness, as was the proportion of weekend time spent with others which excluded one's wife. Men who perceived their marital relationship as closer together spent more of their non-alone time in the company of their wives over the weekend.

CONCLUSIONS

The even distribution of responses to the questions making up the Marital Togetherness Index indicates that the degree of felt closeness with one's wife was quite varied for this group of men. Higher satisfaction with the degree of pairing in the marriage tended to match up with feeling closer together with one's wife.

Social Relationships

Evaluations of their marriages were related to men's general perceptions of their social relationships. Those men who perceived themselves as more separate from their wives also tended to feel more lonely. But marital togetherness was not related to the number of close friends mentioned nor to satisfaction with the contact that older men have with their close friends, in general. Respondents who perceived themselves as closer with their wives were no more likely to name others they felt close to than were those who felt more separate from their wives.

Employment Status

Employment status was not related to marital togetherness ratings. Greater availability of time with one's wife after retirement from the workplace, then, does not mean that retired men feel any closer to their wives than employed men do. Men whose wives are employed apparently spend more weekend time on household tasks than do those whose wives are not employed. To a limited degree, therefore, the division of household tasks is based on the availability of both marriage partners.

Weekend Companionship

Companionship over the weekend hours was related to men's perceptions of their marital togetherness. Those men who felt "more together" with their wives also tended to spend more time with them over the weekend hours. Likewise, those men who perceived themselves as "less together" with their wives spent less weekend time in their company and more weekend time alone; when they were with others, it was less likely to be with their wives.

Conclusions

In short, older men's perceptions of marital togetherness are related to their behaviors in daily activities. Those who perceive themselves as closer together with their wives spend more weekend time in their company and less weekend time in company which excludes them. Perceptions of older men's social relations in terms of loneliness indicate that those who see themselves as closer together with their wives are less likely to feel lonely. In addition, those who are more satisfied with the degree they are paired with their wives tend to be those who feel closer together with them. While those with higher and lower ratings of marital togetherness report equal numbers of close friends other than their wives, those who perceive themselves as "less together" with wives are less likely to spend weekend time in their wives' company. The men who are more paired with their wives would seem to choose more activities which include their close friends and their wives at the same time.

I. INTRODUCTION

The quality of marriage has been explored in different ways by various researchers. Marital satisfaction or happiness is one of the most common aspects of marital quality assessed in previous research. Satisfaction is generally measured by global ratings of happiness, by satisfaction in the marriage, or sometimes by an absence of regrets. Some studies have looked at the frequency of positive and negative sentiments in marital interaction reports as a measure of marital satisfaction or adjustment (Gilford & Bengston, 1979; Rollins & Feldman, 1970). As Troll (1986) indicates, these are evaluations of the individual, not the relationship. Studies using the couple as the unit of analysis would better indicate the dynamics of the relationship, but they face difficulties in assessing the couple's evaluations of the marriage based on often disparate individual assessments. Lewis and Spanier (1979) distinguish between marital quality and marital stability. Happiness and satisfaction in marriage are a part of marital quality which they term marital integration. Lewis and Spanier theorize that the broad concept of marital quality is a principal determinant of marital stability, that is, whether a couple remains married or dissolves the relationship. The present study is concerned with self-evaluations of marital quality among men who, for the most part, have remained married for long periods.

According to Levinger (1977) one of the fundamental aspects of close relationships, such as marriage, is the degree of interpersonal closeness or involvement. While Levinger points to the inherent conflict between a desire for personal independence and interpersonal integration, at some level, feeling closer to one's spouse is an indication of marital quality. Perceived closeness, here, refers to a sort of emotional kinship with one's spouse, not necessarily an objective sharing of time together or greater interdependence in social exchange terms (Kelley, 1979). The present study seeks to assess self-perceptions of marital closeness in relation to self-reports of shared activities. Greater marital quality may "spill over" to greater satisfaction with other relationships as well. Alternatively, unhappiness with the marital relationship may be "compensated for" by more satisfactory relationships with friends. The spillover and compensatory models can be addressed by data from

the present study, which looks at the relationship between perceptions of the marriage in relation to perceptions of close friendships and feelings of loneliness.

The present study examines perceptions of marital togetherness in a group of older men. Research with older persons is sparse compared to that with younger groups. Since older persons have typically been married longer than younger persons, research on marriage which includes older persons often is concerned with whether marital quality changes over time. Cross-sectional data compare older persons' evaluations of their marriages to those of younger persons. This work typically presumes a marital life course centered on the birth and growth of children. Older persons' marriages are often defined as those in the "empty nest" or retirement stage. Those studies concerned with possible effects of the man's retirement on the marriage have generally been limited to effects in the household division of labor and, to a lesser degree, to changes in time spent together. The present study includes men who are retired and those approaching retirement and addresses possible differences in activity patterns of employed and retired men regarding household tasks. The main task of the present study is to further our understanding of how older men's feelings of being more paired with or apart from their wives relate to how they spend their time.

The next section of this paper presents a review of the literature on different kinds of studies with different kinds of data; it discusses studies on older marriages made with cross-sectional data, on older marriages made with longitudinal data, on retirement and marriage, and on companionship and marital quality. The third section explains the method, including the subjects for the study and the various measures used. The following section offers the results of the analyses, and the last section discusses the findings and offers tentative conclusions, as well as suggested areas for further study.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section of the paper reviews selected literature on:

- Older marriages, using cross-sectional data
- Older marriages, using longitudinal data
- Retirement and marriage
- Companionship and marital quality.

STUDIES ON OLDER MARRIAGES: CROSS-SECTIONAL DATA

Marital Satisfaction over the Family Life Cycle

Those studies which have used older populations have, for the most part, tried to assess the quality of older persons' marriages in comparison to younger persons' marriages (see Ade-Ridder and Brubaker, 1983 or Rollins and Feldman, 1970 for a review). Using cross-sectional data, Burr (1970) compared marital satisfaction ratings of 116 couples. The couples were drawn from a random sampling of census tracts but lower socioeconomic couples were not included; consequently, respondents tended to be well educated. The couples were grouped into seven categories depending on length of marriage and age of oldest child. Satisfaction was assessed in six domains: handling family finances, social activities, household tasks, companionship, sex, and children over the life cycle. Three five-point rating items assessed satisfaction for each issue area:

- (1) Frequency of getting mad or angry with the way that an issue -- finances, for example -- is handled in the family
- (2) Amount of improvement there could be in handling of that issue
- (3) Degree of satisfaction with the way that issue is handled

Satisfaction varied depending on the issue area being evaluated. In general, the couples with the highest satisfaction ratings had a child under six years of age or had all children launched at the time of the study. The group with the lowest satisfaction had children of elementary school age (oldest child six to 12 years). The couples in which the husband was retired

rated their marital satisfaction slightly below those whose children were now launched but not yet retired. Men's and women's satisfaction scores tended to reflect the same trends by life-cycle stages. Women of all stages of the family life cycle gave lower ratings of satisfaction with their spouse's household task performance than did men, however. Burr suggested that these cross-sectional data indicated a U-shaped marital satisfaction curve whereby the early and later years of marriage had the highest satisfaction ratings.

Rollins and Feldman (1970) used a similar procedure to assess marital satisfaction over the family life cycle. They surveyed 799 middle-class husbands and wives sampled from upper middle-class census tracts in the Syracuse, New York, area. They measured general satisfaction with the marriage from four questions:

- (1) How often respondents think things are going well between themselves and their spouse
- (2) Frequency of feeling resentful, not needed, and misunderstood from interactions with the spouse
- (3) Frequency of laughing together, calmly discussing things, having a stimulating exchange of ideas, and working together on a project with their spouse
- (4) Satisfaction ratings of their present stage of the family life cycle in comparison to ratings of other stages of the family life cycle.

Two of the items asked about by Rollins and Feldman are fairly general perceptions of the marriage. The other two items ask specifically about negative feelings from interaction and positive companionship activities with one's spouse. Those with the highest marital ratings of things going well with their spouse were either newly married and without children or older couples in which the children were launched and the husband retired. Those in the middle stages reported the lowest frequency of things going well in the marriage. A curvilinear pattern was also found for reports of satisfaction with the present stage of the family life cycle. Reports of the frequency of positive companionship and negative feelings from interactions with their spouse indicated a linear decline particularly in the earlier stages and leveling off compared to the later stages. Men showed no significant differences in their ratings of negative feelings from interactions with their spouse, however.

One of the prominent studies on marital satisfaction over the family life cycle was done by Blood and Wolfe (1960). They interviewed married women in the Detroit, Michigan, area selected through probability sampling (N=909). Marital satisfaction was determined, first, by measuring satisfaction with standard of living, companionship, understanding, and love and affection, and then weighting the measures by the importance the wife attached to each. Also included in the measure was the respondent's desire to have children weighted by her expected number of children. Blood and Wolfe found evidence of a U-shaped curve in marital satisfaction ratings with lower satisfaction for groups of women before the children were launched. Those with children already launched showed a slightly higher level of satisfaction. Women with retired husbands had somewhat lower satisfaction ratings than those with children launched but not yet retired.

Rollins and Cannon (1974) challenged this analysis; they asserted that Blood and Wolfe's data actually showed a linear decline in marital satisfaction due to methodological problems in their measurement of marital satisfaction. Rollins and Cannon compared marital satisfaction ratings using the Blood and Wolfe scale, the Rollins and Feldman scale, and the Locke-Wallace Scale (Locke and Wallace, 1959). The sample consisted of 489 married individuals from all stages of the family life cycle. Respondents were obtained through family and friends of university students in a marriage and family class in the West. Scores on all three measures of marital satisfaction differed significantly by stage of the life cycle. The Blood and Wolfe measure indicated an L-shaped relationship between marital satisfaction and stage of family life cycle: Marital satisfaction fell in the early stages of marriage and remained low for groups later in the life cycle. Rollins and Cannon argue that the L-shaped finding from Blood & Wolfe's study is an artifact of their measurement technique. The Locke-Wallace Scale and the Rollins-Feldman measure indicated a U-shaped satisfaction curve. However, Rollins and Cannon point out that the mean scores of even those in the stages with the lowest satisfaction are still fairly high. In fact, the maximum amount of variation in marital satisfaction accounted for by stage of family life cycle was only 8 percent in their study.

Rollins and Feldman also caution against overinterpretation of the findings since most people say their marriage is satisfying. A study by Stinnett, Carter, and Montgomery (1972) demonstrates the lack of variance in

self-reports of marital satisfaction with a sample of older adults. They found the overwhelming majority of their 408 subjects, aged 60 to 89 years old, rated their marriages as either happy (49.5 percent) or very happy (45.4 percent) at the present time. Respondents in the Stinnett et al. study were recruited from mailing lists of senior citizen centers in Oklahoma. Respondents were largely white and not highly educated. Over half of the respondents (53.3 percent) felt that their marriage had become better over time; 54.9 percent felt that the present time in their marriage was happier than either their middle years or the young adult years.

Reports of high levels of marital satisfaction in these studies may be a reflection of the relationship between marital stability and marital quality or of sampling bias from self-selection to participate. Some researchers have suggested that more satisfying marriages are more likely to remain intact and, therefore, cross-sectional data on those who have been married longer, i.e. older persons, is especially likely to represent satisfying marriages (Gilford and Bengston, 1979; Miller, 1975). In addition, samples of older persons who are willing to participate in a study about their marriages may be biased toward more satisfying relationships. Convenience samples are especially vulnerable to this kind of bias although even random samples may overrepresent positive aspects of marriage if those who refuse to participate in the study differ in the quality of their marriages. It may be that older persons, in particular, are less likely to report negative aspects of their relationships. There is some evidence that older respondents are especially hesitant to report unsatisfying aspects of their marriages (Hawkins, 1966; Miller, 1976).

Problems of Definition and Measurement

Gilford and Bengston (1979) point to inconsistencies in the definition and measurement of marital satisfaction as an additional problem in inferring changes in marital satisfaction over the life course from previous cross-sectional studies. They suggest that marital satisfaction contains two distinct dimensions based on an exchange theory perspective: positive interaction and negative sentiment. The items used to measure positive companionship and negative sentiment were roughly the same as those used by Rollins and Feldman, although Gilford and Bengston added a few categories for each dimension. Items on positive interaction asked for the frequency that respondents laugh together, calmly discuss something, work on something

together, have a stimulating exchange of ideas, and have a good time together with their spouse. Questions on negative sentiments required ratings of the frequency with which respondents 1) become angry, 2) disagree about something important, and 3) become critical and belittling with their spouses. Also included as a measure of negative sentiment were ratings of the frequency with which either spouse is sarcastic and refuses to talk in a normal manner.

Analyses with 1,056 married members of three-generational families in the Los Angeles area suggested that frequency of positive interactions follows a curvilinear pattern while negative feelings from interaction with one's spouse decrease in a linear fashion. The oldest generation (N=383, mean age 67, mean years married 41) reported the lowest frequency of negative feelings from interaction and a middle level of positive interaction compared to the middle generation (N=501, mean age 44, mean years married 21) and the youngest generation (N=172, mean age 22, mean years married 3). Further analyses of the oldest generation (Gilford, 1984) indicated that marital satisfaction was highest for those individuals between 63 and 69 years relative to 55 to 62 years old and 70 to 90 years old in terms of both higher frequency of positive interaction and lower frequency of negative sentiment.

Summary

In summary, there is evidence that the quality of older persons' marriages is high relative to younger persons' marriages. Each study discussed above, however, measures satisfaction in a somewhat different manner and finds different nuances in the results. Even the results of Rollins and Feldman on positive companionship and negative sentiment showed different trends for older marriages than did the study by Gilford and Bengston using roughly the same measures. Inconsistent results among studies may be due in part to sampling bias from convenience samples as compared with random samples. Samples of older married persons are less likely to include those whose marriages have been less satisfactory since those people are less likely to remain married. Younger persons studied include those whose marriages will last and those whose marriages will be dissolved. Such a comparison cannot fairly indicate if the longer lasting marriages change in quality over the years. It is important to remember also that the cross-sectional data discussed above cannot disentangle possible cohort differences in reports of marital quality from age and length of marriage differences. Cohort differences in marital satisfaction seem

especially important to consider, given the dramatic rise in divorce rates in recent years, especially for younger couples. It seems likely that the attitudes of younger cohorts toward marital stability and divorce would be quite different from those of older generations. Holahan's (1984) study discussed below documents some of those differences in attitudes toward marriage between younger and older adults.

STUDIES ON OLDER MARRIAGES: LONGITUDINAL DATA

Longitudinal data are necessary to assess whether marital satisfaction changes over the course of a particular marriage. Unfortunately, few studies have been conducted which can address whether the quality of the marriage changes over long periods of time. Two of the studies discussed below do not include a long enough time span to show changes in the later years of marriage, as defined by researchers with cross-sectional data, but they do indicate stability and change in marital quality over 10 or 20 years. Pineo (1961) analyzed the longitudinal data from the Burgess-Wallin (1953) study of 1000 engaged couples. At the third round of interviews 400 couples remained who had been married up to 20 years. Disenchantment with the marriage seemed to occur from the early to the middle years of the relationship. Disenchantment refers to a drop in marital satisfaction and adjustment. Marital adjustment was measured by several indices. Adjustment included measures of the amount of agreement between the spouses on several issue areas as well as on leisure activity preferences. The study also included measures of positive and negative feelings about the marriage, frequency of demonstrations of affection and shared confidences, and ratings that the respondent would marry the same person again and did not regret the marriage. The data indicated sex differences in the rates of disenchantment. In the early years of marriage men showed larger decreases in marital adjustment scores, whereas changes between the early and middle years of marriage tended to be larger for women. This study may demonstrate only the first half of a linear decline in marital satisfaction or a U-shaped curvilinear relationship between length of marriage and marital satisfaction. After 35 or 40 years of marriage, these couples' scores of marital adjustment may or may not remain at lower levels.

Marital Quality and Personality Variables

Skolnick (1981) analyzed marital quality and its correlations with personality variables from the 20-year follow-up interviews with the Berkeley Intergenerational Studies sample. The men and women in the study had been married roughly 15 to 25 years. Some of the 192 participants had been remarried; the majority (85 percent) were still in the first marriage. Marital satisfaction was assessed both through self-reports and by interviewer ratings of overall marital adjustment, emotional closeness, hostility, satisfaction, and congruence in reference to child-rearing. All interviewers were trained clinicians. For men, interviewer ratings were significantly correlated with self-ratings of marital satisfaction in all five areas. Emotional closeness in the marriage was significantly related to marital satisfaction only for men; women's satisfaction did not seem to depend on emotional closeness or congruence in child-rearing matters. Skolnick found little mean change in marital satisfaction over the last ten years, though individual marriages did change positively and negatively. There was no support for the idea that marital satisfaction goes down with time, although, as with the Pineo data, the length of time elapsed may not be long enough to judge whether a U-shaped curve exists in marital relations.

Longitudinal Analysis and a Cohort Comparison

An unusual study by Holahan (1984) combined a longitudinal analysis with a cohort comparison. Participants in the Terman Study of the Gifted who were married at the time they completed the questionnaire in 1940 and who had graduated from Stanford University or the University of California at Berkeley were recontacted in 1981 for this analysis. Of the 144 participants in 1940, 102 were still living and agreed to complete the questionnaire in 1981. The mean age at the time of contact in 1940 was 30 years; the participants were, then, about 70 years old at the time of the follow-up. Marital satisfaction was determined by responses to six items which respondents labeled from untrue to completely true on 4-point scales. These items were:

- (1) Whenever I have unexpected leisure I always prefer to spend it with my spouse

- (2) When I get money unexpectedly my first thought is how can I use it for my spouse's pleasure
- (3) When my spouse and I are alone together we are almost continuously gay and delighted with each other
- (4) My spouse never does or says anything that either irritates or bores me in the slightest
- (5) My spouse's personality is so completely satisfactory that there is no one else in the world with whom I could be as happy as I am with my spouse
- (6) If my spouse were to die, I would prefer to die also, provided I were not prevented by family responsibilities or religion

This measure is noteworthy because it is quite different from other measures of marital satisfaction. Two more common questions on marital quality also asked were frequency with which respondents regret their marriage and the degree of happiness with their marriage.

Holahan found women, especially, had become more egalitarian in their views of the ideal marriage. The Terman women were also less satisfied with their marriages in 1981 than they were in 1940. Men did not rate their current marital satisfaction differently over time. Two qualifications need to be made in interpreting these findings: first, people were not necessarily married to the same person at the 1981 contact as previously. Second, those who were no longer married in 1981 were asked to rate satisfaction based on their most recent marriage. Holahan reports that no significant results were found when longitudinal comparisons were done for only those individuals who were married at the time of the 1981 interview.

A comparison group of Stanford alumni who graduated from 1968 to 1972 were randomly sampled to provide a group for cohort comparison to the Terman sample with similar educational experiences. The total contemporary sample numbered 161 married alumni. Their mean age was 30.8 years. This younger sample showed more egalitarian views regarding the ideal marriage than the older sample. In addition, they reported less satisfaction with their marriages. This finding may indicate one of at least three possibilities:

- (1) Older respondents are less likely to report negative aspects of their relationships

- (2) Those with egalitarian ideals for marriage are less satisfied than those with more traditional views
- (3) Younger cohorts are less satisfied with their marriages

Limitation of Research

One limitation in both the past research and the present study is that length of marriage, age, and cohort effects are confounded. Holahan provides one of the few attempts to separate out cohort effects from the marital satisfaction ratings. Her findings suggest that today's older persons may have different evaluations of marital quality than will older persons in the next 40 years. The research by both Skolnick and Holahan indicates that men's satisfaction with their marriages does not change much over time. At this time, there have not been sufficient tests using longitudinal data to draw firm conclusions regarding change in older persons' marital satisfaction, however. Had the Holahan study included follow-ups at ten, twenty, and thirty years into the marriage there may have been indications of the curvilinear relationship in marital quality suggested by cross-sectional research.

How Present Study Differs

The present study differs from the earlier research in looking at older persons' experiences in their marriages without comparison to younger samples or to marital experience over time. Respondents are about the same age and, thus, from about the same birth cohort. Most respondents have been married about the same length of time, although respondents were not chosen on this basis, and, therefore, length of marriage was quite different for a minority of the men studied. Marital satisfaction studies which use convenience samples may be subject to selection biases since the marriages of those who volunteer for a study on marital relationships are likely to differ from those who do not volunteer. Selection bias should not be an issue in the present study because participants were not selected to do a study on marital relationships; the focus of the study was on retirement from the workplace. The present study examines the marital experiences of older men; men's responses regarding their marital relationships and activities in the home have usually been left out of previous research for perhaps a variety of reasons. The present study is able to focus exclusively on men's experiences in the marriage. Several of the

previous studies discussed here indicated sex differences in quality of marriage ratings. Since the present study does not include women, it cannot address the marital experiences of older women nor gender differences in those experiences. Lowenthal, Thurner, Chiriboga and Associates (1975) indicated that men are more likely to give socially desirable responses than women, which may account for some of the variation in marital satisfaction ratings between the sexes. Any sex differences in response tendencies is unlikely, however, to account for all the differences shown in previous research between men's and women's experience of marriage.

STUDIES ON RETIREMENT AND MARRIAGE

Assumptions About Effects of Retirement

Other research related to older marriages has focused specifically on the effects of men's retirement from the workplace on married life. Most of this work has looked at changes in household task allocation as a result of the husband's being in the home during the weekdays. Kelley (1981) suggests that retirement increases levels of interdependence between the spouses. As the husband becomes incorporated into the household there would also be more opportunity for conflict of interest and problems in coordinating companionate activities. Obviously, this assumes that when men retire they are in the home for much of the day and not working at other jobs or pursuing other activities. Another assumption implicit in this analysis is that the wives of retired men are homemakers and therefore must change their daily lifestyles with the addition of the retired man in the household. While these norms may hold fairly well for most people or, perhaps, for most people of a particular cohort, they tend to gloss over the heterogeneity in activities, occupations and lifestyles of older adults.

Effect of Retirement on Household Tasks and Marital Communication

Keating and Cole (1980) looked at marital satisfaction in couples ($n=136$ men and $n=117$ women) in which the husband had recently retired from teaching in relation to the division of household tasks and marital communication. Couples did not report increased role interchangeability within the home upon retirement. Data from interviews with 25 of the couples suggested that the division of household tasks did not typically change much. Wives, all homemakers, in the Keating and Cole study did note that there was more

housework to be done since the husband was home more often. Wives also noted that scheduling of housework tends to change in response to the husband's needs.

According to retrospective self-reports, the majority of the women and men did not experience increased levels of marital communication upon retirement. There were no gender differences in satisfaction with the level of communication in the marriage, although men were less likely to see disadvantages of their retirement in terms of their marital relationship. When asked specifically about disadvantages of retirement, women were more likely to give a response. Only 44 percent of the men named any disadvantage; of these, the majority missed contact with business colleagues. Women, however, cited decreases in personal freedom, too much togetherness, and too many demands on their time from the marital relationship. For a third of the women who did not make these complaints, Keating and Cole suggest that pleasure of time with their spouse and satisfaction in feeling needed may offset a loss of personal freedom.

Ballweg (1967) compared division of household tasks for couples in which the husband was still working to those in which the husband had retired. He interviewed 52 couples for this study. Only wives reported the frequency with which their husbands engaged in each of 12 common household tasks. Retired husbands were more likely to always take responsibility for at least one of the tasks asked about. Working husbands were somewhat more likely not to take responsibility for any of the household tasks. However, there was no indication that couples with retired husbands shared household tasks more than those with employed husbands. Differences between the groups were modest. Husbands in all cases were only likely to perform those tasks commonly associated with the masculine role such as burning trash and fixing faucets or furniture. This finding might have been even stronger if Ballweg had included tasks related to car and lawn care in his measures; most of the tasks asked about in his study were associated with female roles in home care.

Brubaker and Hennon (1982) indicate that men are most likely to be held responsible for car and lawn maintenance according to reports by their wives. They analyzed reports by 207 women, who indicated they were in dual-earner and dual-retired couples, on responsibility for various household tasks. Women in dual-earner couples tended to be younger than women in dual-retired couples. The difference in mean age for the two groups was 20 years; dual-earner women

averaged 42 years whereas retired women averaged 62 years. According to the women's reports, couples in which both husband and wife are retired are more likely to share in the shopping than are those in which both members are employed. This finding was the only difference in responsibility for various household tasks between the two groups. Retired women were also more likely to report that their husbands had responsibility for earning money in the family than were employed women. This finding may indicate that women's self-identification as retired is tied to their husbands' employment status rather than their own previous employment. Group differences in responsibility for earning money may also reflect a greater propensity of older women to see their own earnings from employment as secondary to their husbands' earnings than do younger women.

Time Sharing in Long-Term Marriages

Parron and Troll's (1978) study of 22 golden wedding couples demonstrated the variability in time sharing for long-term marriages. Some couples shared almost all their time, others had separate interests and pursuits, and others had cycles of shared and unshared time during a normal day. Parron and Troll indicate that retirement can bring more opportunity for shared time and consequently increased intimacy or increased conflicts. However, retirement per se is not the main causative factor in determining satisfaction in the marriage; it is the changing situational factors which can exacerbate both the harmonious and disruptive aspects of the relationship.

Summary

These studies indicate that men's retirement from the work force leads to only modest change in household task allocation, if any at all. The Keating and Cole study also suggests that retirement does not necessarily lead to increases in marital communication. However, past studies have not tested whether household task allocation remains the same following men's retirement if their wives are currently employed. One might expect the division of labor in the household to be based on the time availability of both the husband and the wife. Given that activity patterns in the home appear to be largely fixed and sex specific, it may be that changes in the work status of either partner will not produce significant alterations in the household division of labor. Brubaker and Hennon's research on dual-retired and dual-earner couples also

suggests little difference in household task responsibility based on employment status. To further explore this issue, the present study will examine the amount of time men spend on home-related tasks by the employment status of both the respondent and his wife. Unlike the studies of Ballweg and Brubaker and Hennon which examined men's actions in the household based on their wives' reports, the present study can assess men's participation in home-related tasks based on self-reports of behavior.

COMPANIONSHIP AND MARITAL QUALITY

Effects of Leisure Activities on Marital Satisfaction

As Orthner (1975) states in his research on leisure activity patterns, we know more about how people spend their time than we know about how their extra time affects their lives and those with whom they interact (see Orthner and Mancini, 1980 or Holman and Epperson, 1984, for a review). Miller (1976) conducted a path analysis of the antecedents of marital satisfaction on a sample of 140 married adults in the Minneapolis area. A positive relationship between frequency of companionship activities and marital satisfaction was one of the strongest in the data. The index of marital satisfaction was composed of satisfaction ratings with the handling of money, recreation, amount of affection, chore performance, relations with in-laws, sexual relations, and religious beliefs and activities in the marriage. Marital companionship was based on self-reports of the frequency with which respondents had visited friends, gone to a movie or other entertainment, spent an evening just chatting, entertained friends in their home, had a good laugh or shared a joke, eaten at a restaurant, taken a drive or walk for fun, and been warm or affectionate. Miller suggests that frequency of companionate activities most likely influences marital satisfaction but that the direct relationship found could be in the other direction or a reciprocal influence.

Orthner (1975) suggests that patterns of interaction in the marriage and perceptions of marital satisfaction are mutually influenced by one another. Orthner's research looks at only one part of social interaction, leisure activity. He defines leisure time as activity during discretionary time which is perceived as pleasureable. This view of activity leaves out time spent performing obligations; these may have enjoyable aspects but do not count as leisure per se. Orthner collected data from 216 married men and 226 women drawn by stratified area probability sampling of a southeastern city in 1973.

Leisure activity from the previous weekend was classified into three categories: individual, joint, and parallel activities. Parallel activities are those acts which are done in the context of a group but which include only limited social interaction such as spectator events of all kinds. Joint activities are acts which do require interaction with others for the successful completion of the activity such as active sports and casual conversations. Classification into categories was predetermined by ratings of four outside judges in the field of leisure and recreation. Orthner hypothesized that frequency of individual activities would be negatively associated with marital satisfaction; joint acts would be positively associated with marital satisfaction; and parallel acts would not be associated with marital satisfaction. These relationships were hypothesized to hold regardless of the number of years married.

Orthner used four items from past research to measure marital satisfaction. The item rating how often the respondent thinks things are going well with his or her spouse comes from the Rollins and Feldman study (1970). Three additional items were asked from the Burgess and Wallin (1953) index which Pineo (1961) reports on from the longitudinal follow-up study. These items included whether the respondents had ever seriously considered separating from their mate, ratings of their happiness in the marriage, and the probability that they would marry the same person again given the opportunity. Length of marriage was assessed in five-year increments; 147 respondents had been married for 24 years or longer. Respondents checked any of 96 possible leisure activities they had engaged in during the previous weekend. Orthner excluded activities from the index if the respondent indicated that the activity was not enjoyed. Respondents also reported the number of hours spent on each activity and whether the activity was done alone, with their spouse or with someone else.

All three hypothesized relationships between type of activity and marital satisfaction were supported, but the level of association was only significant for those married under six years and those married for 18 to 23 years. The positive association between joint activities and marital satisfaction was strong for both husbands and wives in each of these marital career periods. It is interesting to note that the lowest marital satisfaction scores were found for group IV, who had been married 18 to 23 years, as was the case with several other studies of marital satisfaction over the family life cycle (Blood &

Wolfe, 1960; Rollins & Feldman, 1970). On the whole, the oldest group of respondents reported high levels of satisfaction with their marriages; 44 percent of the wives and 47 percent of the husbands in the oldest group scored 19/20, showing high satisfaction with their marriages. For 64 percent of the oldest group, those married 24 years or more, marital satisfaction scores were 17 or better.

Effects of Leisure Activities on Communication

Orthner (1976) also examined the relationship between leisure activity patterns and degree of open communication in the marriage with the same sample. (In this case, 223 men and 228 women provided usable data for analysis.) Orthner expected the degree of communication to be positively associated with proportion of time spent in joint activities and negatively associated with time in individual activities. The ten-item Marital Communication Inventory developed by Bienvenu (1970) was used to assess the degree of openness in marital communication. In general, he found the frequency of interaction in leisure activity to be related to greater levels of communication shared in the marriage. The relationship between communication ratings and frequency of joint and parallel activities was stronger for the husbands than it was for the wives. Associations of marital communication and activity patterns was again strongest for those married between 18 and 23 years and for those very recently married.

Palisi (1984) also found that frequency of joint activities was positively related to marital satisfaction in secondary analyses of independent random samples from London (N=179), Los Angeles (N=211) and Sydney, Australia (N=152). All respondents in these samples were male. The frequency of only eight joint and parallel activities was asked about in these studies, as compared to Orthner's list of 96 items, for the measure of marital companionship. Marriage well-being was measured with four items:

- Frequency that marriage has been series of disappointments
- Happiness with marriage
- Would marry the same person again
- Would be happier if married to another

Palisi notes that in general, joint activities, such as sharing affection or a laugh together, were more often reported than parallel ones like going to an event or visiting with friends. This finding may be a reflection of the greater ease with which one can share a moment, such as a laugh or a kiss, as compared to a planned event such as a movie. Individual and joint activities were significantly related to marital well-being for all three samples. Frequency of engaging in joint activities was associated with higher levels of marital well-being. A negative association between individual acts and well-being was not as strong. As hypothesized, the frequency of engaging in parallel activities was not significantly related to the marital well-being measure.

Both Orthner and Palisi indicate that marital companionship and satisfaction are correlated but not necessarily causally related. Their hypotheses stem from exchange theory, which would suggest that increased interaction leads to increased positive sentiment and that increased positive sentiment provides an incentive to spend more time together. Classification of leisure time into joint, parallel, and individual activities may not be operationalized sufficiently well to tap a stronger relationship between shared leisure activities and marital quality. The difference between joint and parallel activities is not always clear to the uninformed reader; for instance, playing tennis, snow skiing, and camping are joint activities while, bicycling for pleasure, ice skating and hiking are parallel acts. Furthermore, the limitation to activities which the subject considers enjoyable may mask any relationship between satisfaction with the marriage and shared time allocation.

How Present Study Differs

Unlike these earlier studies, the present study explores marital companionship from self-reports of daily activities on a typical weekend without the imposed structure used in past research of possible activities. Open-ended activity listings allow for examination of both what activities are engaged in as well as with whom. Orthner measured the amount of time spent with one's spouse from general self-reports of total time spent together on the weekend. Measures in the present study should be more precise estimates of time spent with particular others, since they are summed from reports of time spent on specific activities with one's spouse.

The present study also looks at marital quality for a group of older men in terms of perceived closeness with one's spouse. Ratings of satisfaction with the degree of being paired with one's spouse further add to the assessment of marital quality in the present study. Associations between perceptions of the marriage as more together and behavioral reports of shared activities are explored here without the framework of joint and parallel types of companionship activities used by Orthner and Palisi. To better understand whether and how marriage quality relates to other relationships, the present study also examines self-reports regarding close friendships outside the marriage. Perceptions of loneliness reported in the present study give some indication of the quality of respondents' social relations as a whole. Since this study concerns the relationships of older men who are either retired or approaching retirement, the present study is able to explore possible differences in how couples proportion their time on household-related tasks based on their employment status.

III. METHOD

SUBJECTS

The subjects for this analysis were 71 of 80 participants in a year-long study conducted by The RAND Corporation.¹ About half the participant group were within a few years of retirement (48 percent, $n=34$) and about half had retired (52 percent, $n=37$) in the last two years from middle management or professional positions in a large corporate setting in Los Angeles.² They had volunteered to participate in the research project and to serve on a task force examining the retirement process. The subgroup of 71 participants are all those in the group of 80 who were married.

All participants were male. The mean age was 61.4 years; their ages ranged from 55 to 69 years. Most of these men were white (66.2 percent, $n=47$) and well educated. Only one man had not completed at least some college. Over half of the participants had graduated from college or better (54.9 percent, $n=39$). The participants did not have health or financial problems. Ninety-four per cent ($n=67$) of the sample described their health as good or excellent. The large majority reported that they "always have money left over" or have enough money "with a little extra sometimes" (88 percent, $n=63$).

Several men had been married more than once (18.3 percent, $n=13$) though the great majority were married only once (81.7 percent, $n=58$). The number of years in the current marriage ranged from one year to 46 years with a mean of 32.8 years ($SD=9.15$). For those who had been married more than once, the mean number of years in the current marriage was 21.54 ($SD=10.81$). The mean length of marriage was 35.34 years ($SD=6.52$) for those married only once. Only five men had no children at all. Most of the participants' children no longer lived in the household; 69 percent of the men ($n=49$) lived with their wife only.

In-person interviews were conducted with each participant by one of four research assistants.³ The structured interviews averaged 70 minutes long and

¹Drs. Tora Bikson, Jacqueline Goodchilds, and Norman Shapiro were the principal investigators on the study. The project was supported by a research grant from the John and Mary R. Markle Foundation to The RAND Corporation.

²The Department of Water and Power in Los Angeles.

³Cary Funk, Leonie Huddy, Laurie Skokan, and Sherry Schneider conducted the interviews. Leonie Huddy also served as coordinator of the research assistants. All of the research assistants were graduate students at UCLA in the Department of Psychology.

ranged from 45 to 105 minutes. For participants who were still working, the interviews were conducted in their offices. The interviews with retired participants were conducted in their homes. At the end of the interview each participant was given a set of psychological scales to complete and return to the researchers by mail; included in these scales was an 8-item version of the Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale (Hays & DiMatteo, 1986; Russell, Peplau & Cutrona, 1980).

MEASURES

Six measures were used to help assess the subjects' marital satisfaction and use of time:

- The degree to which the husband felt paired with his wife
- The husband's satisfaction with the degree of their pairing
- The husband's perception of time shared with his wife
- The degree to which the husband felt lonely
- The husband's perception of and satisfaction with existing friendships
- Analysis of the husband's weekend activities

Degree Paired in Marriage

Feelings of closeness with one's spouse were assessed by the following question: "Married people organize their lives in different ways. Some operate as a pair or couple in everything, while others go their separate ways. How would you describe your marriage?" Responses were coded on a 5-point scale where 1 represents those who act as a pair in everything and 5 represents those who go their separate ways.

Satisfaction with Degree Paired

A follow up question to the 5-point rating of themselves as paired or separate from their wives asked respondents to evaluate their satisfaction with the degree they acted as a pair. The question read: "Overall, how satisfied are you with this arrangement?" Responses were on a 5-point scale with 1 indicating very dissatisfied and 5 indicating very satisfied.

Perceptions of Marital Time Sharing

A further assessment of marital closeness involved respondent's assessments of the proportion of time he spent with his wife outside of work. This item read: "What percentage of your (non-work) activities, on average, are done together (with your wife)?" Responses ranged from 0 to 100 percent.

Friendships and Loneliness

In addition to the short form of the revised UCLA Loneliness Scale, several questions were asked about perceptions of close friends outside the marriage. Respondents were asked to name up to five close friends other than their wife "who they felt close to or spent a lot of time with." If respondents named couples as friends, they were counted as one unit. This information yielded data on the number of close friends outside of the marriage and on the perception of others as paired. Satisfaction with closeness of the friendships as a whole, was assessed by the following question: "How satisfied are you with the amount of contact you have with close friends if 5 represents very satisfied, 1 represents very dissatisfied, and 3 somewhere in between?"

Daily Schedules

Respondents reported their activities on a typical Saturday and Sunday over the last two weeks from the time they awoke until bedtime. For one respondent the last two weeks had been especially unusual ones; instead, this respondent reported his activities based on the most recent two week period which had been typical for him. Up to two activities were recorded per hour of the day. Who the respondent did the activity with was also noted. This procedure allowed for multiple activities to be recorded but is effectively a measure of activity per half hour interval.

Weekend time was chosen for comparison because it allows both retired and employed men equal opportunity for time spent with their wives or in activities such as household tasks. Weekends are the only time both retired and employed men have comparable time available to use at their own discretion. For this reason, weekend time seemed the only fair parallel between employed and retired men's everyday activities.

IV. RESULTS

PERCEPTIONS OF MARITAL CLOSENESS

The mean response to the 5-point rating of the marital relationship as paired or separate was 2.48 ($SD=1.11$). Most of the respondents were spread across the first 4 points on the scale. Only 2 respondents indicated that the most separate rating, a value of 5, described their marriage.

Satisfaction with one's marital arrangement as paired or more separate was fairly high. Few respondents gave satisfaction ratings on the negative end of the scale; the lowest rating was a value of 2. The mean for the satisfaction item was 4.46 ($SD=0.81$).

Respondents' ratings of the percent of time they spend with their wives averaged 54.5 percent ($SD=30.09$). This rating was highly correlated with the 5-point rating of the degree to which respondents were paired with their wives ($r=-.72$, $p<.0001$). Those men who felt more paired with their wives also reported a greater percentage of their non-work time was spent with their wives. Since the items were highly intercorrelated, they were combined to form one index of marital togetherness. All further results regarding marital togetherness refer to this index.

To create the Marital Togetherness Index, the degree-paired item was reverse scored such that a high score indicated being more paired with one's wife. Both the degree-paired item and the percent-of-time-shared item were then converted to a standard scale with a mean of 5 and a standard deviation of about 3 ($SD=2.78$). The items were then summed together; the value of the index is equal to the mean of that sum. One respondent did not answer the question regarding the percentage of activities done with his wife. The value of the Marital Togetherness Index for this respondent was based on the degree paired item only. A high score on the Marital Togetherness Index indicates greater perceived closeness or togetherness with one's wife.

Since most respondents indicated high ratings on the 5-point scale of satisfaction with the degree to which they were paired with their wives as discussed above, relationships between marital togetherness and satisfaction were examined by conducting a t-test on the Marital Togetherness Index. The t-test compared those who rated their satisfaction on the marital pairing item

as very satisfactory to those who rated their satisfaction somewhere below that.

Table 1 indicates that those who were very satisfied had significantly higher Marital Togetherness Index scores ($t=2.94$, $p<.005$). Men who felt more paired with their wives also tended to be more satisfied with that marital arrangement.

Table 1

GROUP DIFFERENCES IN SATISFACTION ON MARITAL TOGETHERNESS INDEX

	<u>Mean</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>t</u>
Very satisfied with marital arrangement as paired/separate	5.72	44	2.94 $p<.005$
Less than very satisfied with marital arrangement as paired/separate	3.82	27	

LONELINESS

The mean score on the loneliness measure was 15.93 ($SD=4.75$) with a range from 6 to 32. The UCLA Loneliness Scale was moderately correlated with marital togetherness. Those who perceived their relationships as less together were also more likely to feel lonely ($r=-.28$, $p<.02$, $N=70$).

FRIENDSHIPS

On average, respondents mentioned 2.90 friends ($SD=1.7$) other than their wives who they "felt close to or spent a lot of time with." The number of friends mentioned by respondents was not significantly correlated with marital togetherness ($r=.11$, $p<.36$). Satisfaction ratings of the amount of contact respondents have with close friends in general revealed no relationship between perceptions of marital togetherness and satisfaction of contact with one's close friends ($r=-.04$, $p<.74$). The mean satisfaction rating for contact with friends was skewed to the positive end of the scale (mean=4.07, $SD=.96$).

Sixteen respondents (26 percent) of all those who named at least one friend included a couple as close friends. The mean number of couples mentioned was .50 ($SD=1.10$). Respondents who perceived at least some of their friends as couples were no more likely to see themselves as paired on the Marital Togetherness Index than were those who did not mention couples as close friends, as the t-test between these groups in Table 2 illustrates. Perceptions of marital togetherness, then, do not appear to be related to perceptions of close friends as paired marital couples.

Table 2
GROUP DIFFERENCES IN REPORTING COUPLES AS FRIENDS
ON MARITAL TOGETHERNESS INDEX

	<u>MEAN</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>t</u>
Named at least one couple as close friend	5.55	16	.60
			$p < .55$
Did not name couple as close friend	5.05	46	

EMPLOYMENT STATUS

The present study can assess differences in marital togetherness for retired and employed men; this has not been looked at in past research on older marriages.

T-tests between retired and employed respondents revealed no significant differences between the groups on the Marital Togetherness Index, as shown in Table 3. Retired men view their marital relationships no differently than men of similar ages who are employed in terms of perceived togetherness.

HOUSEHOLD ACTIVITIES AND EMPLOYMENT STATUS

The question raised by past researchers of whether retired men do more household tasks than do employed men can be addressed in these data. Comparison of the amount of time and proportion of time spent on household tasks for retired and employed men over the weekend indicated that retired men

Table 3

GROUP DIFFERENCES IN EMPLOYMENT STATUS
ON MARITAL TOGETHERNESS INDEX

	<u>MEAN</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>t</u>
Employed	4.98	34	.06
Retired	5.02	37	<u>p<.95</u>

may spend somewhat less time on household chores than do employed men. T-tests between retired and employed men on amount and proportion of weekend time spent doing household tasks approached significance at the .05 p-level, as seen in Table 4.

Table 4

GROUP DIFFERENCES IN EMPLOYMENT STATUS ON WEEKEND
TIME SPENT DOING HOUSEHOLD TASKS

TOTAL NUMBER OF HALF HOURS SPENT ON HOUSEHOLD TASKS

	<u>MEAN</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>t</u>
Employed	11.94	34	1.91
Retired	9.32	37	<u>p<.06</u>

PROPORTION OF WEEKEND TIME SPENT ON HOUSEHOLD TASKS

	<u>MEAN</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>t</u>
Employed	32.80	34	2.04
Retired	25.35	37	<u>p<.05</u>

The household tasks considered for this analysis included home, yard, and car tasks; preparing meals; and shopping or errands. Table 4 indicates that employed men tended to spend a greater proportion of their weekend activities on these household tasks ($t=2.04$, $p<.05$) than did retired men. While weekend time spent on household tasks may be a function of the respondent's employment status, it seems reasonable to suggest that it may also reflect his wife's employment status. If household task allocation is based on availability of household members, then the wife's employment status may affect the amount of time husbands spend on home care tasks over the weekend.

Table 5 presents the results of a t-test by wife's employment status for the amount and proportion of weekend time respondents spend on household tasks. Those men whose wives were working tended to spend significantly more weekend time on household tasks ($t=1.96$, $p<.05$). The difference in the proportion of weekend time spent on household tasks for those whose wives were employed compared to those whose wives were not employed only approached significance ($t=1.70$, $p<.09$) as seen in Table 5.

Table 5

GROUP DIFFERENCES IN WIFE'S EMPLOYMENT STATUS
ON WEEKEND TIME SPENT DOING HOUSEHOLD TASKS

TOTAL NUMBER OF HALF HOURS SPENT ON HOUSEHOLD TASKS

	<u>MEAN</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>t</u>
Wife employed	12.26	27	1.96
Wife not employed	9.55	44	$p<.05$

PROPORTION OF WEEKEND TIME SPENT ON HOUSEHOLD TASKS

	<u>MEAN</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>t</u>
Wife employed	32.85	27	1.70
Wife not employed	26.50	44	$p<.09$

The results in Table 6 explore the indications that the husband's or wife's employment status may be related to weekend time allocation for household tasks by looking at the employment status of both marriage partners at the same time. It seems especially important to account for both spouses' employment status, since employed men tended to be married to a woman who was also employed ($r=.35$, $p<.003$). The group in which both the respondent and his wife were employed spent more time on household tasks over the weekend at levels approaching significance ($t=2.04$, $p<.05$). The difference was not significant for the proportion of weekend activities spent on household tasks by employed men whose wives are also employed or not employed ($t=1.58$ $p<.12$). As shown in Table 6, retired men did not differ in the amount or proportion of time spent on household tasks depending on the employment status of their wives.

Table 6

GROUP DIFFERENCES BY COUPLE'S EMPLOYMENT STATUS
ON WEEKEND TIME SPENT DOING HOUSEHOLD TASKS

TOTAL NUMBER OF HALF HOURS SPENT ON HOUSEHOLD TASKS

	EMPLOYED MEN			RETIRED MEN		
	<u>MEAN</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>MEAN</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>t</u>
Wife employed	13.95	19	2.04	8.25	8	.77
Wife not employed	9.40	15	$p<.05$	9.62	29	$p<.44$

PROPORTION OF WEEKEND TIME SPENT ON HOUSEHOLD TASKS

	EMPLOYED MEN			RETIRED MEN		
	<u>MEAN</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>MEAN</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>t</u>
Wife employed	37.0	19	1.58	23.1	8	.56
Wife not employed	27.5	15	$p<.12$	26.0	29	$p<.58$

SHARED ACTIVITIES AND MARITAL TOGETHERNESS

On the average, respondents spent 39.6 percent ($SD=22.21$) of all their weekend time alone with their wives. The mean proportion of weekend time respondents spent either alone with their wives or in the presence of their wives and other friends and relatives was 55.2 percent ($SD=23.53$). Respondents reported that an average of 36.6 percent of their weekend time was spent alone. Table 7 presents the mean proportion of all weekend activities spent with others and the correlations between weekend time shared with others and

Table 7

CORRELATIONS OF SHARED ACTIVITIES AND MARITAL TOGETHERNESS INDEX

PROPORTION OF ALL WEEKEND ACTIVITIES

	<u>MEAN</u>	<u>r</u>	<u>p</u>
Percent with wife only	39.6	.27	.02
Percent with groups including wife	15.6		
TOTAL PERCENT WITH WIFE	55.2	.46	.0001
Percent with others excluding wife	8.2	-.31	.008
Percent done alone	36.6	-.29	.01

PROPORTION OF ALL WEEKEND ACTIVITIES DONE WITH OTHERS

	<u>MEAN</u>	<u>r</u>	<u>p</u>
Percent with wife only	62.5	.13	.26
Percent with groups including wife	24.3		
TOTAL PERCENT WITH WIFE	86.8	.38	.001
Percent with others excluding wife	13.2	-.38	.001

perceptions of marital togetherness. Greater proportions of weekend time spent in combination with one's wife was significantly related to perceptions of the marriage as more together on the Marital Togetherness Index ($r=.46$, $p<.0001$). The weakest relationship was between marital togetherness and weekend time spent alone with one's wife ($r=.27$, $p<.02$). The proportion of weekend time spent alone was negatively correlated with perceptions of marital togetherness ($r=-.29$, $p<.01$) as was the proportion of weekend time spent with others which excluded one's wife ($r=-.31$, $p<.008$). Those who perceived their marital relationship as less together spent significantly more of the weekend without their wives.

Another way to assess the relationship of shared time between spouses and perceptions of togetherness is to examine the proportion of weekend time spent together out of all weekend time spent with other people. Table 7 shows the correlations between the Marital Togetherness Index and the proportion of weekend time spent with wives out of the total spent with other people. Men who perceived their marital relationship as closer together also spent more of their non-alone time in the company of their wives over the weekend ($r=.38$, $p<.001$). Conversely, those who saw their marriages as less together tended to spend more weekend time alone; when they were with others it was less likely to be with their wives ($r=-.38$, $p<.001$). The correlations here are the same because the categories of weekend companions are mutually exclusive. Out of all the weekend time which is spent with other people, that time which is not spent with one's wife must be spent with people other than one's wife such as friends, colleagues, and other family members.

V. DISCUSSION

VARIABLE PERCEPTIONS OF TOGETHERNESS

The distribution of responses to the questions making up the Marital Togetherness Index was fairly even. This result indicates that the degree of felt closeness with one's wife was quite varied for this group of men. Variability in perceptions of togetherness with one's wife parallels Parron and Troll's (1978) finding that couples in long-term marriages vary greatly in their patterns of time sharing. Higher satisfaction with the degree of pairing in the marriage did tend to match up with feeling closer together with one's wife. The correlation between satisfaction and togetherness, while strong, did not explain more than 11 percent of the variance in the responses.

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Separateness and Loneliness

Evaluations of the marriage were related to men's general perceptions of their social relationships. Those men who perceived themselves as more separate from their wives also tended to feel more lonely. Loneliness refers to a perceived separateness from all others which is felt as a social deficiency. The Marital Togetherness Index, however, taps a perceived separateness from one particular other. The Marital Togetherness Index gives no indication that separateness is undesired or perceived as a deficiency. The relationship between loneliness and marital togetherness may indicate a greater probability of feeling separate from all others in an undesirable way when one perceives greater separateness from one's spouse.

Friendships with Couples

Married couples frequently socialize with other couples. It became evident during the pre-testing for the present study that in order to ask married men about their friendships, one needed to allow for friends who were other couples as a single unit of analysis. Research on friendships does not commonly look at the couple as a single unit and so loses the possibility of understanding how friendships with couples influences social experiences. There was no tendency for the men in the present study to differentially name

couples as friends depending on their perceptions of their own marriages' togetherness. Men who saw themselves as closer together on the Marital Togetherness Index were no more likely to describe their close friends as couples than were those who saw themselves as less together with their wife. This finding suggests that there is not a general perception rule operating in respondents' evaluations of their own marriage which carries over to perceptions of their friends' marriages. This area deserves further exploration; it remains unclear how friendships with couples relate to the broader network of social experiences.

Marital Togetherness Versus Close Friends

Marital togetherness was not related to the number of close friends mentioned nor to satisfaction with the contact that older men have with their close friends, in general. While this finding lends no support to the notion that people compensate for less satisfying marriages by closer friendships outside the marriage, it does not lend support to the spillover model either. Respondents who perceived themselves as closer with their wives were no more likely to name others they felt close to than were those who felt more separate from their wives. If there was a general propensity for interpersonal involvement according to a spillover model, one would expect those who were more paired with their wives to have more friends and possibly to be more satisfied with the amount of contact they have with close friends. It is possible that these measures of close friendships are too crude to indicate differences in the quality of close friendships. The relationship between perceptions of marriages and other close relationships deserves further attention in future research.

EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Employment status was not related to marital togetherness ratings. Greater availability of time with one's wife after retirement from the workplace, then, does not mean that retired men feel any closer to their wives than employed men do. This finding is in keeping with past research by Keating and Cole (1980) on retirement and marriage which indicated that men do not perceive many differences in their married life after retirement. Results from the present study regarding men's weekend time on household tasks according to employment status differed somewhat from past findings. Retrospective reports

from the wives of retired men indicated that men do about the same number of tasks in the home, and do a little more in some areas, after retirement. According to men's own reports from the present study, retired men spend a little less time on household tasks than do employed men during the weekend hours. The relationship was somewhat weak but, at the least, indicates that employed men do about as much around the house as retired men, not less.

The present study differs from previous studies of employment status and household task allocation by Ballweg (1967) and Brubaker and Hennon (1982) in several ways. First, the present study compares men's own reports of their activities in the home rather than reports by their wives. Secondly, rather than using global reports of particular activities done by men in the home, the present study assessed household task allocation from detailed self-reports of all daily activities. Due to obvious differences in time availability for retired and employed men, the present study compares time spent on household tasks over the weekend hours only. Weekend time is the most appropriate for comparison, here, because it allows both groups of men equal opportunity to engage in household task-related activities.

The results presented here indicate that men whose wives are employed spend more weekend time on household tasks than do those whose wives are not employed. When both the husband's and the wife's employment status were examined, only those men in dual-employed households spend more time doing household tasks on the weekend at levels approaching significance. These results may indicate that, to a limited degree, the division of household tasks is based on the availability of both marriage partners. The differences between groups of employed men whose wives were also employed and those whose wives were not employed were only weakly significant in terms of household task allocation. Replication of these findings is necessary before firm conclusions can be drawn.

WEEKEND COMPANIONSHIP

Companionship over the weekend hours was related to men's perceptions of their marital togetherness. Marital togetherness was assessed in the present study by combining two global ratings of (1) being paired with one's wife and (2) perceptions of sharing time with one's wife. The correlation between these items indicated that they were both tapping a single concept despite their superficially different question wordings. Companionship, on the other hand,

is based on detailed self-reports of daily activities. While both the Marital Togetherness Index and the companionship measures ask about time sharing, the measures of companionship over all weekend activities cannot be assumed to coincide with global perceptions of time sharing based on question wording alone. The relationship between the togetherness and companionship measures found in the present study may indicate a reciprocal influence of these perceptions on one another. One might expect perceptions of greater togetherness to encourage greater amounts of time to be spent together; one would also expect greater amounts of time together to influence global perceptions of greater marital togetherness.

The present study found that those men who felt more together with their wives also tended to spend more time with them over the weekend hours. This relationship was strongest for activities which included the respondents' wives but not to the exclusion of other friends and family members. Likewise, those men who perceived themselves as less together with their wives on the Marital Togetherness Index spent less weekend time in their company and more weekend time alone. Of all the respondents who spent weekend time with other people, those greater in marital togetherness were more likely to include their wives among their social companions. When those who saw their marriage as more separate spent weekend time with others, their companions more likely excluded their wives. These findings are in keeping with past work which correlated marital satisfaction with companionship activities. While Orthner's (1975, 1976) studies looked at activities done individually and jointly with one's spouse, the present study suggests that the choice of other companions is related to marital quality as well. It is interesting to note that marital togetherness is not necessarily an indication of more frequent companionship between just the two spouses; perceptions of togetherness were more strongly related to the more general category of social activities which included the spouse but possibly included others as well.

SUMMARY

In short, older men's perceptions of marital togetherness are related to their behaviors in daily activities. Those who perceive themselves as closer together with their wives spend more weekend time in their company and less weekend time in company which excludes them. Perceptions of older men's social relations in terms of loneliness indicate that those who see themselves as

closer together with their wives are less likely to feel lonely. In addition, those who are more satisfied with the degree they are paired with their wives tend to be those who feel closer together with them. While those with higher and lower ratings of marital togetherness report equal numbers of close friends other than their wives, those who perceive themselves as less together with them are less likely to spend weekend time in their wives' company. Those men who feel more paired with their wives would seem to choose more activities which include their close friends and their wives at the same time. Further research which links detailed information on daily behaviors to perceptions of marital quality needs to be done here. The present study offers a beginning understanding of older men's perceptions of marital togetherness.

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